

Legends, Songs, and Customs of Dardistan.

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C. BIRTH CEREMONIES.

As soon as the child is born the father or the Mulla repeats the "Bâng" in his ear "Allah Akbar" (which an Astôri, of the name of Mirza Khan, said was never again repeated in one's life!). Three days after the reading of the "Bâng" or "Namâs" in Gilgit and seven days after that ceremony in Astor, a large company assembles in which the father or grandfather of the newborn gives him a name or the Mulla fixes on a name by putting his hand on some word in the Koran, which may serve the purpose or by getting somebody else to fix his hand at random on a passage or word in the Koran. Men and women assemble at that meeting. ⁸⁴⁴ There appears to be no persons whatsoever in ~~the land~~ ^{the land} and the women are remarkably chaste.* The little imitation of pardah amongst the Ranis of Gilgit was a mere fashion imported from elsewhere. Till the child receives a name the woman is declared impure for the seven days previous to the ceremony. In Gilgit 27 days are allowed to elapse till the woman is declared pure. Then the bed and clothes are washed and the woman is restored to the company of her husband and the visits of her friends. Men and women eat together everywhere in Dardu land. In Astôr, raw milk alone cannot be drunk together with a woman unless thereby it is intended that she should be a sister by faith and come within the prohibited degrees of relationship. When men drink of the same raw milk they thereby swear each other eternal friendship. When men [608] • In Gilgit this custom does not exist, but it will at once be perceived that much of what has been noted above belongs to Mussulman custom generally. When a son is born great rejoicings take place, and in Gilgit a musket is fired off by the father whilst the "Bâng" is being read. ⁸⁴²

* This is said to be no longer the case, except in those Dard republics, where foreigners have not yet interfered. In monarchical Yasin, and, above all, in Hunza, sexual luxury has ever been great. Where Sunni rulers have substituted dancing-boys for the dancing of men (formerly both men and women danced together), a worse evil has been introduced. A most sacred relationship is the one created by the foster-mother. The linguistic portion of "The Hunza-Nagay Handbook," as also of Parts I. and II. of "Dardistan" solves the questions of whether and where polygamy, endogamy, etc., existed among the Dards, who, in appearance and sentiment as regards women, as also in legendary lore, are very "European," but whose passion will convert into strict Muhammadans and haters of the "Fireghis." ^[834] ^[838]

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The marriage takes place when the girl reaches puberty, or perhaps rather the age when she is considered fit to be married. It may be mentioned here in general terms that those features in the ceremony which remind one of Indian customs are undoubtedly of Indian origin introduced into the country since the occupation of Astor by the Maharaja's troops. Gilgit which is further off is less subject to such influences, and whatever it may have of civilization is indigenous or more so than is the case at Amler, the roughness of whose manners is truly Chitrali, whilst its apparent refinement in some things is a foreign importation.

When the marriage ceremony commences the young man, accompanied by twelve of his friends and by musicians, sits in front of the girl's house. The mother of the girl brings out bread and Ghee-cakes on plates, which she places before the bridegroom, round whom she goes three times, caressing him and finally kissing his hand. The bridegroom then sends her back with a present of a few rupees or tolas in the emptied plates. Then, after some time, as the evening draws on, the agent of the father of the boy sends to say that it is time that the ceremony should commence. The mother of the bride then stands in the doorway of her house with a few other platefuls of cakes and bread, and the young man accompanied by his bridesman ["Shunerr" in Astori and "Shamader" in Gilgiti,] enters the house. At his approach, the girl, who also has her particular friend, the "Shaneroy" in Amler, and "Shamaderoy" in Gilgiti, rises. The boy is seated at her right, but both in Astor and in Gilgit it is considered indecent for the boy to turn round and look at her. Then a particular friend, the "Dharm-bhai" * of the girl's

* The "brother in the faith" with whom one will has been drunk, *Vide* page 41.

Betrothal,	= bali = pumpkin in Gilgit, Bud—Amler	
Bridegroom,	= bilolan, Gil.	bilolan—Amler.
Bride,	= bilal	
Bridegroom's MEN,	= garai, Gil.	bilalan, Amler.
Marriage	= gar, Gil.	Kash. Amler
Dowry,	= "dab," Gil. and Amler	

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575 brother asks her if she consents to the marriage. In receiving, or imagining, an affirmative, he turns round to the Mulla, who after asking three times whether he, she and the bridegroom as well as all present are satisfied, reads the prayers and completes the ceremonial. Then some rice, boiled in milk, is brought in, of which the boy and the girl take a spoonful. They do not retire the first night, but grace the company with their presence. The people assembled then amuse themselves by hearing the musicians, eating, &c.

576 It appears to be the custom that a person leaves an entertainment whenever he likes, which is generally the case after he has eaten enough.

577 It must, however, not be imagined that the sexes are excluded from each other in Dardistan. Young people have continual opportunities of meeting each other in the

578 fields at their work or at festive gatherings. Love declarations often take place on these occasions, but if any evil

579 intention is perceived the father of a girl is punished by this savage, but virtuous, race with death. The Dards know and speak of the existence of "pure love," "pik labiqi." Their love songs show sufficiently that they are capable of a deeper, than most savage, feeling. No objection to lawful love terminating in matrimony is ever made unless the girl or the boy is of a lower caste. In Gilgit, however, the girl may be of a lower caste than the bridegroom. In Astar it appears that a young man, whose parents—to whom he must mention his desire for marrying any particular person—refuse to intercede, often attains his point by determining to live in the family of the bride and

580 become an adopted son. A "Shin" of true race at Astar 623 may live in concubinage with a girl of lower caste, but the

•[581] the grain, flesh and sheep (or any accompanying the betrothed person) is called in the Dardic "siddiqi"

Wedding,	=	Shin,	GI.	Shin,	GI.
Gift,	=	Shin,	GI.	Shin,	GI.

Wedding dinner "grain (Shi)" in Gilgit. "Shin (Shi) Shi" in Astar (?) ["Shi" is bread, "Shi" is a sheep, Shi = food]

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The most serious difficulty which seems to
 possess these countries is to have relationship in marriage, where
 a man and all his relations come not only within the prohibited
 degrees, which is against the spirit of Mohammedanism, but also
 create the only real bond of true attachment that I have seen in
 Daristan, where other relations seemed always engaged in
 murdering one another.

Nearly all the chiefs in Daristan give their children to
 persons of low degree to nurse, and these and the children of
 the nurse become attached to them throughout life and are their
 only friends. But this foster-relationship is also taken in order
 to get rid of the consequences, say, of crime; for instance, in the
 case of adultery, or supposed adultery, the suspected person who
 declares that he enters into the relationship of a son to the
 woman with whom he is suspected, after a certain penalty, is
 really accepted in that position, and the trust is in no case
 betrayed. It is the only kind of forgiveness which is given in
 Daristan generally to that sort of transgression; but, further
 than that, drinking milk with some one, or appointing some one
 as foster-father, which is done by crossing two veins of milk,
 creates the same relationship, except amongst the noble caste of
 Ilkhan, who were expelled by the Russians from India or Kash-
 ghir, and who hold the cow in abhorrence as one of their religious
 dogmas, whereas, in other ways, they are really Russians, among
 whom we find Hindoos peeping out through the thin crust of
 Mohammedanism.

The subject of caste, by the way, is also one which is generally
 misunderstood, and which, if developed on Christian lines, would
 give us the perfection of human society, and solve many of the
 problems with which we are dealing in Europe in more advanced
 civilisations. I have just read with interest some remarks
 against caste by Sir John Petherick, who has been in India some
 three or four years. I think that before people speak on subjects
 of such intricacy, they should take the position of students of
 the question, learn at least one of the classical and one of the
 vernacular languages of India, and then show us the rule of
 justice which continuing to be known; even in regard to such
 subjects of infant marriage and the prohibition of widow re-
 coveries, there is a side of the question which has not yet been
 put sufficiently before the British public. Infant marriage, when

764 as exists south of the Hindoo Koosh, and Wood remarked the same in Kundooz. In Darel and Tangir a piece of roughly-carved wood is placed at each end of the grave, which is neatly plastered over, and small pieces of white spar are placed along the ridges between the pieces of wood, which are about 8 feet apart. In Chitral, instead of wood, flat pieces of stone or slate, 3 or 4 feet long, are used.

428 All that concerns the division and inheritance of land is naturally of great consequence among a people who live almost entirely by agriculture. In Gilgit and the adjacent valleys, on a man's death his land is not divided equally among his sons, as is prescribed in the Sharyat, but in equal portions between his wives' families; for instance, should a man leave one son by one wife and three by another, the one son inherits half land, and the other three the other half, which again is sub-divided between them. Should one wife have sons, and the other only daughters, the land is divided among the former, the daughters being only entitled to a marriage-portion out of the land. Should a man die leaving only daughters, the land goes to the nearest male heir of the deceased; but a curious exception is made in the case of a man leaving only a single daughter, who is allowed to take the whole land as her marriage-portion. The practice is always spoken of as a favour, and not a right, but it seems to be a relic of a custom by which the succession of women was once recognised. The history of these countries shows several instances of the succession of female rulers in default of male heirs. In Wakhan and Sirikol daughters share equally in everything except land, which is divided among the sons. In Chitral and the Swat Valley the law of the Sharyat, by which all sons have equal shares, is followed. Daughters are entitled to a dowry out of the paternal land on marriage. In Torwal, women inherit the father's land in equal shares with the sons.

608 The custom of foster relationship is maintained among all the ruling families, and its ties seem more stringent than those of blood kinship. On the occasion of a son or daughter being born, the child is assigned to a foster-mother, in whose house it is brought up, so that frequently the father does not see his children till they are six or seven years old, and the whole family of the nurse place themselves at the disposal of their foster-child, with whom, for the rest of their lives, their fortunes are unalterably bound up. Whatever are a man's misfortunes or crimes in after-life, his good and bad fortunes are equally shared. Should exile be his lot,

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his foster kindred accompany him. On the other hand, if he rises to influence, his foster-father is generally his most confidential adviser, and his foster-brothers are employed on the most important missions. 608

The custom of cementing friendship by the milk connection seems a favourite one. Should a woman dream that she has adopted any person as a son, or should any man dream that he has been adopted by a certain woman, the connection is carried out in the same way as the forced adoption before mentioned, and nobody would think of refusing to recognise it. The practice is now falling somewhat into disuse, but it was extremely common not many years ago. Milk from a woman's breast is esteemed a sovereign remedy for cataract and other eye-diseases. A resort to it also establishes the milk-tie for ever afterwards. [787]

It is sometimes customary for a young couple, at the time of marriage, to induce a mutual friend to become their foster-father. The tie is ratified at the time of eating bread together. Bride and bridegroom being seated opposite to one another, the foster-father elect seats himself between them, and taking a piece of bread in each hand crosses his arms, observing to keep the right one uppermost, and puts the bread into their mouths. From that time he is regarded as their father. [757]

The foster relationship is regarded as so close, that marriage between foster relations would be looked upon as incestuous, and, in spite of the precepts of the Koran, it would be impossible for a man to marry the widow of his foster-son. [835]

The formation of these ties is practised in a peculiar way among the Ashimadek clans of Chitral. It is customary for every infant to be suckled in turn by every nursing mother of the clan; consequently there is a constant interchange of infants going on among the mothers, for the purpose of strengthening tribal unity. [853]

The Shins are noted for their miserly habits, which they sometimes carry to great extremes. Every man has a secret hiding place in the mountains, where he conceals his money, metal pots, wife's jewels, and all his most valuable property. Occasional stealthy visits are paid to the treasure, which is never taken out for use except on festive occasions. No feeling of honour seems to exist as to the appropriation of another's treasure should it by chance be discovered, and frequent quarrels arise from this cause. Treasures are frequently lost altogether by the sudden death of the owner, 454 [685]